

# ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL

## Internal Audit Section

### INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

CUSTOMER DEPARTMENT	DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES
AUDIT DESCRIPTION	VERIFICATION AUDIT
AUDIT TITLE	INTERNAL AUDIT REVIEW OF CREMATORIUM
AUDIT DATE	MAY 2017

2017/2018



## **1. BACKGROUND**

This report has been prepared as part of 2017/18 risk based Internal Audit Annual Plan and has been conducted in accordance with relevant auditing standards. The report is based on discussions with key personnel and information available at the time of the Audit.

Argyll and Bute Council operates a single crematorium near the village of Cardross in the Helensburgh and Lomond Area. The crematorium is managed by a superintendent who is assisted by a charge hand and 2 crematorium attendants.

During the financial year 2016 – 17, Cardross Crematorium carried out 737 cremations, 728 of these being adults.

The current and previous year's budgets are as follows for the Crematorium:

2016 – 17 Expenditure budget = £354k Income budget = £370k

2017 – 18 Expenditure budget = £348k Income budget = £381k

The Bill for the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 22 March 2016 and received Royal Assent on 28 April 2016. It is an Act of the Scottish Parliament to restate and amend the law relating to burial and cremation; to make provision about exhumation of human remains; to make provision in relation to the inspection and regulation of burial authorities, cremation authorities and funeral directors; to enable provision to be made for the licensing of funeral directors; and for connected purposes.

## **2. AUDIT SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES**

The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy of controls in place in respect of the Cremation process and compliance with the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016, associated codes of practice and internal procedures.

Internal audit reviewed Legislation, Codes of Practice and procedures in place, a site visit was undertaken to discuss and observe working practices and review documentation to check that controls were in place and operating effectively to maintain compliance with legislation.

### 3. RISKS CONSIDERED

Audit Risk: Failure to adhere to the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016.

### 4. AUDIT OPINION

The level of assurance given for this report is High.

<b>Level of Assurance</b>	<b>Reason for the level of Assurance given</b>
<b>High</b>	Internal Control, Governance and the Management of Risk are at a high standard with only marginal elements of residual risk, which are either being accepted or dealt with. A sound system of control is in place designed to achieve the system objectives and the controls are being consistently applied.
<b>Substantial</b>	Internal Control, Governance and management of risk is sound, however, there are minor areas of weakness which put some system objectives at risk and where specific elements of residual risk that are slightly above an acceptable level and need to be addressed within a reasonable timescale.
<b>Reasonable</b>	Internal Control, Governance and management of risk are broadly reliable, however although not displaying a general trend there are a number of areas of concern which have been identified where elements of residual risk or weakness with some of the controls may put some of the system objectives at risk.
<b>Limited</b>	Internal Control, Governance and the management of risk are displaying a general trend of unacceptable residual risk above an acceptable level and system objectives are at risk. Weakness must be addressed with a reasonable timescale with management allocating appropriate resources to the issues raised.
<b>No Assurance</b>	Internal Control, Governance and management of risk is poor, significant residual risk exists and/ or significant non-compliance with basic controls leaves the system open to error, loss or abuse. Residual risk must be addressed immediately with management allocating appropriate resources to the issues.

This framework for internal audit ratings has been developed and agreed with Council management for prioritising internal audit findings according to their relative significance depending on their impact to the process. The individual internal audit findings contained in this report have been discussed and rated with management.

A system of grading audit findings, which have resulted in an action, has been adopted in order that the significance of the findings can be ascertained. Each finding is classified as High, Medium or Low. The definitions of each classification are set out below:-

**High** - major observations on high level controls and other important internal controls. Significant matters relating to factors critical to the success of the objectives of the system. The weakness may therefore give rise to loss or error;

**Medium** - observations on less important internal controls, improvements to the efficiency and effectiveness of controls which will assist in meeting the objectives of the system and items which could be significant in the future. The weakness is not necessarily great, but the risk of error would be significantly reduced if it were rectified;

**Low** - minor recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of controls, one-off items subsequently corrected. The weakness does not appear to affect the ability of the system to meet its objectives in any significant way.

## 5. FINDINGS

Internal Audit carried out a review of Cardross Crematorium in August 2014 as a result of issues highlighted at a national level. All findings generated from the 2014 review were actioned and signed off as part of our follow-up process; a review of current practices confirms ongoing compliance.

The following findings were generated by the audit in terms of compliance with the appropriate sections taken from the Burial and Cremation (Scotland Act 2016):

### CREMATION

#### Cremation Authority: Duties

It was evidenced upon visit to the Crematorium that the grounds, building and equipment were clean and tidy and in a good state of repair. The crematorium operates 2 cremators both of which were professionally installed, one is 18 years old and the other was installed within the last year. Both cremators are serviced under a comprehensive maintenance contract. This contract is in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations and the requirements of the guidance notes issued under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. All 4 members of staff are fully trained by the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities and hold Certificate of Proficiency in the Practical and Ethical Operation of Cremation Equipment, 2 of these staff members have also completed a course in relation to retrieval of baby ashes with the remaining 2 to undertake this training in the near future.

### Application for cremation

Form A – Application for Cremation is a statutory form issued by the Scottish Office, it was evidenced that this form is in use at Cardross Crematorium with the Argyll and Bute Council logo and the name and address of the crematorium added to the text as permitted. A supplementary form is also submitted by applicants to provide further essential information. It was evidenced that all fields on these forms are reviewed for completeness and appropriateness upon receipt from the applicant. Any queries or anomalies are followed up immediately and action taken accordingly.

It was evidenced that bookings are only taken upon provision of all relevant documentation including a copy of death certificate. The documentation is reviewed by 2 members of staff, details entered onto the form F equivalent – Authority to Cremate record card and signed by both to evidence review. This record card stays with the remains throughout the entire cremation process.

### Requirements for carrying out cremation

It was evidenced that cremations are performed only when an application has been granted following review of documentation by 2 members of staff. The process is undertaken within the premises by suitably qualified staff using professionally installed equipment.

## HANDLING OF ASHES

### Duty of cremation authority before carrying out cremation

It was evidenced that the applicant must declare on the supplementary application form, the manner in which the ashes should be dealt with. i.e. Retained by the Cremation Authority for collection by the applicant/funeral director or disposed of in a specified manner.

### Duty of cremation authority following cremation

Where specified by the applicant, ashes are held for 14 working days following cremation pending collection, it was evidence that there were ashes stored in the locked cabinet awaiting collection. Where the applicant has expressed their wish to have the ashes dispersed in the garden of remembrance, the cremation authority allows a period of one week in case the applicant changes their mind.

### Failure to collect ashes from the crematorium

In most instances, funeral directors collect the ashes from the crematorium on behalf of the client in a timely manner, however, around 10% of applicants wish to collect the ashes themselves or nominate a third party. Where the ashes are not collected within the 14 working days period, the Cremation Authority will contact the funeral director to ascertain further instructions. Where the cremation authority is not provided with further instructions, the applicant will be contacted by letter after a 2 month period.

### Duties of cremation authority where ashes are returned by the funeral Director

This has not happened to date, however, should the applicant change their mind a letter must be provided and signed by the applicant stating their revised wishes.

## REGISTER

### Cremation Register

It was evidenced that the Cremation Register is maintained both in manual format and on the computerised Burial and Cremation Administration System (BACAS) in the prescribed manner. A cremation certificate can be produced from this system should it be required. The register is retained indefinitely; the handwritten register is available for inspection by members of the public and extracts of information provided from the electronic system following request and payment of the relevant fee.

### Fees

It was evidenced that the fees and charges for 2017-18 have been updated and published on the Council's website. The fees and charges are updated on an annual basis as part of a Council wide exercise. A printed copy of the fees and charges is available in the office of the crematorium and a copy issued to applicants with the book of remembrance form.

### Code of Practice

It was evidenced that Cardross Crematorium complies with the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA) Code of cremation practice 2014 and Infant Cremations Scotland – Code of practice 2015 as issued by the Scottish Government. The crematorium staff were consulted through the Technical Committee (Scotland) prior to the issue of the current codes.

### ARRANGEMENTS

#### Death of an adult or child (under 16 but other than still-born)

It was evidenced that, in line with the Act, the nearest living relative (including a close friend) or an executor of the deceased will form the role of the applicant. Where the applicant is someone else (e.g. care home, Local Authority etc.), a written explanation would be required stating suitability to be applicant.

### INSPECTION

An inspection was carried out on 14 September 2016 by the Inspector of Crematoria Scotland. This was a favourable report with no shortcomings highlighted in any aspects of the procedures in place and several areas of good practice were noted.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This audit has provided a high level of assurance as *“internal control, governance and the management of risk are at a high standard with only marginal elements of residual risk.”* There was one finding identified as part of the audit and this, together with agreed management actions, are set out in the attached action plan. Progress with implementation of actions will be monitored by Internal Audit and reported to management and the Audit Committee.

Thanks are due to the crematorium staff and management for their co-operation and assistance during the Audit and the preparation of the report and action plan.



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